

Sketch Of The Life Of Mrs. Sophia Fox Sea  
By Jennie C. Morton  
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Chapter First of a Series of Sketches of the Distinguished Women  
of Kentucky in the Last Quarter of the 19th Century.

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## MRS. SOPHIA FOX SEA.

Among the prominent women of Kentucky notable for gifts of genius in different lines, and for intelligent usefulness in public measures, Mrs. Sophia Fox Sea is first in Louisville, if not in the State. She had attained an enviable distinction in literature in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and since has added to her laurels many leaves for her untiring work as historian of the Albert Sidney Johnston Chapter of the U. D. C. Her pamphlet, "Synoptical History of Slavery in the United States," is regarded as one of the best and most carefully and truthfully written articles on this subject that has ever appeared. It was written especially for her chapter, but its excellence as a statistical history attracted the attention and interest of North and South, and a second edition was demanded to supply the unusual call for it. The subject was one of national inquiry, and in the pamphlet she has met every point of disputed authority and given a fair and charming description of "Life in the South" before the Civil War, when ruled by a patriarchal form of government, such as we have glimpses of in the Bible, when slavery was instituted for the convenience and comfort of God's people. This article met a public want in the field of Southern history, and gave her as its author a rare reputation.

She had become known as a writer through her beautiful poems, "Requiem Bells," called the Southern Marseillaise, "Red Bess," "Christ, Our Lamp," "The Old Home," "Golden Rod," "Marguerite," "Christmas Bells." These poems are among her noted songs, and have been copied into various collections of poems. One stanza of "Christmas Bells" was published in the program of the dedicatory services of the First Baptist church of Louisville, Ky. Her "Hymn of Dedication" for the First Presbyterian church of Louisville, Ky., has been justly placed among "Famous Hymns of All Ages." This poem is the one with which the author is herself best satisfied. Not contented with her work as a poetess, she turned her facile pen into other paths of literature and produced many popular short stories; among the most noted are: "An Autocrat Dethroned," "A Root of Bitterness," "The Forty-Niners," etc. She now has a novel in the publisher's hands in New York, which will strengthen the public impression that her versatility of talent easily gives her prominence as one of the leading writers of the South.

A woman of Mrs. Sea's character is naturally ambitious, and, like the lark starting from a vantage limb as she soars, easily reaches the destined height, then throws back to the world below the unrivalled sweetness of her song.

People always desire to know something personal of the singer when they have heard the song or read the writer's thoughts presented in a rare and charming diction. We feel some timidity in writing of the home life of this lady, lest we shall not do justice to her genius and industry, in the fact that she was expected from her youth to be a woman of distinction, above the ordinary home-loving daughter, wife and mother. Descended as she is from a long line of brilliant ancestry (see *The Irvines* in *May Register*, 1905), it was anticipated that she would be an inheritor of the talent of her ancestors and take her place among the moulders of thought and sentiment in her native State. Instinct with emotion, full of enthusiasm and patriotic devotion, it was natural to find her among the foremost men and women helping onward humanity and striving to reach the level way under a brighter sky, trying by her beautiful songs to soothe the sorrowing, to revive the discouraged and help the broken-hearted. This mission she has performed since the Civil War.

She was born in Danville, Ky., in a home of elegant surroundings in the very atmosphere of distinction in this cultured little college town. Her father and mother, who were styled by some "King and Queen of Hearts" because of their aristocratic lineage, wealth and culture and gracious hospitality, were lavish in their advantages to this beautiful daughter of their house. Educated and accomplished, she entered society as one of its choicest spirits. With that rare charm of manner in which one feels a touch of the warmth and goodness of the heart, along with the polish of cul-

tured society, she attracted admiration everywhere—was indeed one of the brightest stars of the society in Danville in her girlhood. She married Capt. Andrew M. Sea, of Louisville, Ky., a gentleman worthy in every way of this accomplished young lady. He was a student at Yale College when the Civil War began. He left college immediately and went South and enlisted in the Confederate army. He commanded "Wiggins' Arkansas Battery" under Gen. Forrest, and this battery was selected as an escort to President Davis and his cabinet after the surrender of Gen. Lee, and it is noted that this battery was the last surrendered this side of the Mississippi river.

Capt. Sea's genealogy is more American in its distinction than that of his wife, who comes down from the royalty of Great Britain and France, the Fox and Irvine and Tunstall families all tracing their ancestry to the noblest houses of Europe. Capt. Sea's paternal grandfather, Leonard Sea, was one of Mad Anthony Wayne's "picked" soldiers. He was always called upon to defend with his courage and sagacity posts of danger and was at all times found worthy of the trust. Capt. Sea is also descended from the famous White and Blackwell families of Virginia, and from the noble pioneer McBrayer family, originally Scotch covenanters. He is a nephew of Judge Wm. H. McBrayer, deceased, of Lawrenceburg, Ky., whose munificent donation to endow a chair in Central University, of Biblical study, was the inspiration and substantial basis of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary established in Louisville, Ky.

Capt. Sea is a fine specimen of a Ken-

tucky gentleman, lawyer and Christian. He is an elder in the First Presbyterian church of Louisville, and has been appointed secretary of the board of trustees for the Confederate Home, Pewee Valley, Ky. He is greatly beloved by the old soldiers there for his brotherly care of their welfare and gentle sympathy with their conditions.

Capt. and Mrs. Sea are the parents of four sons, namely: Fontaine Talbot Fox Sea, Robert Winston Sea, Andrew McBrayer Sea, Jr., and Logan Hunton Sea. It is not too much to say that Mrs. Sea is the cherished Queen of Hearts in her happy home, adorning it with all the Christian graces of a beautiful womanhood, in its perfection of wife and mother, as well as literateur.